

## MAORI LIBRARY SERVICE COMMITTEE

## LIBRARY SERVICE TO MAORIS

REPORT TO THE N.Z.L.A. COUNCIL, FEBRUARY, 1963

The Maori Library Service Committee, which was formed after a discussion between representatives of the Maori Education Foundation and the New Zealand Library Association, met in Wellington on 14 and 15 November 1962. Members of the Committee are: Miss A. Andrews, School Library Service, Auckland; Miss C. F. Mathews, Librarian, Public Library, Porirua; Mr A. E. Mercer, Librarian-in-Charge, Country Library Service, Hamilton; Mrs K. M. Spencer, Librarian, Public Library, Rotorua; Miss G. Tuhou, Country Library Service, Christchurch; Miss H. B. Cowey (Convener), National Library Service, Wellington. The Hon. Secretary of the Association, Mr J. P. Sage, attended ex officio on both days of the meeting. For a short time on 14 November the meeting was also attended by Mr D. G. Ball, Chairman, Maori Education Foundation; Mr J. K. Hunn, Secretary, Department of Maori Affairs, and Mr D. M. Jillett, Officer for Maori Education.

There is a need to make the Maori people aware of the books and library services available already in their communities. However, many pakehas do not make full use of library facilities and suggestions for improvement of libraries and greater publicity would be of value to all people in New Zealand, Maori and pakeha. The Committee was made aware of some evidence of positive discrimination against allowing Maoris to use the library. It is *recommended* that the Association should direct its efforts to making librarians examine their own services for signs of discrimination.

The Maori Education Foundation is especially concerned with the problem of encouraging young children to become familiar with books before they begin school. Most education authorities agree that the example of parents who use books for information and pleasure is one of the strongest factors in encouraging children to take an interest in books. Therefore there is a need for books to be made widely available to the whole family in Maori communities as in others.

Few people can afford to buy all the books they need and for this reason sharing books in libraries by communities is becoming recognised as the most sensible way of solving the problem of book supply. The Maori people have a tradition of sharing possessions and this principle of common ownership should already be familiar to them. However, many Maoris still consider public libraries to be pakeha institutions. Therefore it is the task of librarians to prove to the Maori people that libraries have a great deal to offer them too. This could

mean increased library publicity and extra care taken by librarians to cater for the interests of Maoris. The extension of the present Government assistance to public libraries and the increased provision of books in rural areas and the provision of extra books for children may be necessary. Details of improved or extended services which could be of particular value to Maori people are as follows:

## 1. CHILDREN'S LIBRARY SERVICES

### (a) *Children's books in public libraries*

At present, as the result of the work of some energetic librarians and interested teachers, the use of children's sections of public libraries is increasing rapidly. When children are taken to public libraries in classes and introduced to books by the librarians they will make good use of the books for project work and for recreational reading. After the first introduction, children will continue to visit the library in their own time, often introducing their parents to it also. Maori children when encouraged will use their public library with enthusiasm especially when the librarian is able to know the children by name and to take an interest in their reading. Maori children will take part eagerly in library activities, for example, radio book reviews and book week competitions. However, it should be remembered that parents, whether Maori or pakeha, have responsibilities and the use of public library service by families is most effective.

Where some of the older children need special encouragement with their reading, picture books are useful. This can make heavy demands on the stock of a public library and extra Government assistance with loans of junior books for public libraries encouraging Maori readers could help to improve the services given.

### (b) *Pre-school children's books*

Books suitable for parents to read to pre-school children are often the picture books heavily in demand by older children too. Picture books are often expensive and it is only through libraries that many children can become acquainted with the best that is available for them. Public libraries can supply these books as part of their usual service to individual parents. A useful extension of the public library service could be to make collections of picture books available to groups of parents at play centres and similar organisations. This would make parents aware of the best picture books available for children. However, the public library remains the most effective permanent distribution centre for these books. If public libraries are to give an adequate service of books for pre-school children for Maoris as well as for pakehas, Government assistance with loans of children's picture books is desirable.

### (c) *Library service in schools*

At present, children from Standard 1 upwards have access to books from the School Library Service. These books are available in changing collections with additional material available on request. The use

of these books depends on the enthusiasm of teachers. Where the teachers are interested in the full education of the children and encourage children to read and to take books home, good use is made of the Service. Unfortunately not all teachers use the resources available. Lack of interest is often supplemented by a lack of responsibility for the books and this is followed by complaints about the need to pay for losses. An increased awareness by teachers of the scope of the help to schools by the School Library Service would make more books available in schools for the use of Maori and pakeha children.

Teachers should be made aware of the need for many good books for children and should be guided in the evaluation of children's books as an important part of their training. Teachers in Maori schools need special training in ways in which Maori children can be encouraged to use books and to care for them. Librarians should be available in greater numbers to make teachers aware of the services available to them. At present there is a shortage of qualified librarians and the onus is strongly on teachers to use all facilities to keep children in touch with books of quality. Maori colleges should be well equipped with good libraries.

The extension of service by the School Library Service to primer classes would require a greatly increased expenditure by the Government to provide for this Service the necessary increased book stock, accommodation and staffing. Larger quantities of picture books available in schools would be of especial value where young children have problems of reading, for example where children come to school with poor English as in many Maori communities. However if the School Library Service could extend its service in this way out of concern for Maori children, all children could benefit.

## 2. LIBRARY SERVICE TO RESIDENTS IN RURAL AREAS

The visits of book vans in rural areas have encouraged the formation of group libraries staffed by voluntary librarians. These group libraries are organised successfully in communities of all kinds and some of the most successful are in Maori districts where there is an enthusiastic voluntary librarian. However, the establishment of these libraries is dependent on local enthusiasm. At present the Country Library Service vans carry almost entirely adult books. An extension of service to allow books for pre-school children would increase the effectiveness and popularity of this service in Maori communities as well as in others. School children have books available at school. No doubt more could be done to make these books available at times when schools are closed.

In rural communities where there is county cooperation with boroughs for library service, a stronger and more effective service over the whole area is possible. However, this does not occur in many parts of New Zealand and the extension of library service in Maori communities is an urgent problem which should not be delayed by lack of cooperation between boroughs and counties. Therefore it



may be advisable for the Government to provide library services of this kind where these are found to be necessary. Such services would be directed to the whole family, given on a free basis, would need to be most flexible and would probably require book vans. If a demonstration of this kind of service could be given in a selected area, its success would depend on the availability of suitable staff.

### 3. BOROUGH AND CITY LIBRARY SERVICES FOR ADULTS

Well educated Maoris will use public libraries as a matter of course. Others need encouragement. Library service through talks to groups, newspaper and radio publicity, hospital library service, all help to make Maoris and pakehas increasingly aware of the services of their libraries. Where the Maori Women's Welfare League has cooperated with the local public library good results have been obtained. In some larger libraries, a librarian with special interests in Maori people could concentrate on services for them.

Attention should be paid to the general impression Maoris receive when they enter a public library. If they feel welcome, and are helped with preliminary requirements for becoming members of the library, they will want to come back. Librarians should be made aware that there may be a need for extra efforts to help Maoris make full use of the library. Help may be needed with the problem of getting books back to the library. It has been found that the cooperation of the school teacher or responsible members of the Maori community enables overdue books to be recovered.

Libraries in Maori areas could include in their interior decoration some examples of Maori art. However, these should be genuine examples of good art, including the work of contemporary craftsmen.

The New Zealand Library Association and the Department of Maori Affairs could help to improve library service to Maori people by organising national publicity. Two ways in which this could be done are:

- (1) A national campaign to make librarians aware of the need to encourage Maoris to use public libraries.
- (2) Library publicity among Maori people.

Posters and other publicity material could be prepared and supplied to libraries. Lists of books of special interest to Maoris would be useful. Service to Maoris could be among the topics to be discussed at meetings of librarians and described in *NEW ZEALAND LIBRARIES*. Some public libraries could hold a Maori Month which would include displays, loan collections, exhibits, talks, etc. all intended to attract the Maori to the library.

### 4. RECRUITMENT

There have been few Maoris who have become qualified librarians. If the most effective use is to be made by Maoris of the book stocks available in New Zealand, more qualified Maori librarians are needed. Young people at school should be told of the advantages of library work. When the N.Z.L.A. pamphlet, *A Career in Library Work* is

revised, the needs of Maori recruitment should be remembered. Publicity for young people should include details of the different aspects of library work well illustrated with attractive photographs.

Local librarians in communities where there are Maoris can help by giving talks at schools about library work. Maori children can be encouraged to help in public libraries and to take part in library activities such as library clubs. Extra efforts may be need to encourage Maori children to prepare for work in libraries because their parents may not be aware of the advantages of this work.

Bursaries from Maori Education Foundation funds to encourage Maoris to take university degrees and to go to the Library School would have a far reaching effect on library service to Maoris. This would be probably the most important long term step towards putting abundant supplies of books into Maori homes.

## 5. OTHER SUGGESTIONS CONSIDERED

### (a) *Provision of cheap books in country stores*

It has been suggested that country storekeepers should be asked to provide a selection of cheap books other than comics. This suggestion seemed beyond the scope of this Committee because the books are supplied by large wholesale firms whose main concern is to make a profit. Members of the Committee thought that a good supply of library books in country districts was the only likely means of counter-acting the effects of the widespread sale of books of poor quality.

### (b) *Commissioning books to be written for Maori children*

It was suggested that books were needed with settings familiar to Maori children. After the Committee had discussed books known in libraries to be favourites of Maori children it was found that many popular books, for example those by Dr Seuss, are good books of their kind and have plenty of appeal without the need for familiar backgrounds. The popularity of folk tales from other lands also bears this out. The Committee members agreed that good imaginative books are seldom written to order and that funds could be better spent on providing in quantity for Maori children good books which have been written already.

There is, however, a great need for books of non-fiction dealing with New Zealand subjects and this is a field where commissioned work could be fruitful.

### (c) *Book drive*

The suggestion that there should be a campaign for books from pakeha homes to be sent to a central organisation for distribution in Maori schools was strongly opposed. The experience of book drives has been that almost all the books donated need to be discarded for reasons of subject, content, and physical condition. Books collected in this way must be screened by people familiar with present day acceptable standards of children's books. The results that are likely to be obtained would not be worth the effort. The effect of sending to

Maori schools books no longer wanted by pakehas could be demoralising for Maori children.

The stated advantages that there would be no issuing processes necessary would be well offset by the probable dubious quality of books and the loss of opportunity to demonstrate care and responsibility for books.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends:

1. That the Government be approached:

- (a) To make available additional loans of children's books in public libraries where there is active encouragement of Maoris to use the services.
- (b) To supply books for pre-school children to public libraries in enough quantities to enable loans to be made to organised groups as well as to individual parents.
- (c) To extend the services of the School Library Service to include the supply of books for children in the primers in all schools.
- (d) To extend the services of the Country Library Service in rural areas to include books for pre-school children.
- (e) To deploy library services where necessary in country areas where no library service exists at present.
- (f) When suitable staff is available, to conduct a demonstration of library service to Maoris in a selected area.

2. That the New Zealand Library Association publicise the need for special efforts for library service to Maoris:

- (a) By preparing appropriate posters and other material for use by librarians.
- (b) By encouraging discussion of library service to Maoris at meetings of librarians and in **NEW ZEALAND LIBRARIES**.
- (c) By revision of the pamphlet *A Career in Library Work* with the aim to make it more attractive for young people leaving school.

3. That the Maori Education Foundation be approached:

- (a) For assistance with a demonstration of library service in a Maori area.
- (b) For assistance in the supply of publicity material by the New Zealand Library Association.
- (c) For the provision of bursaries to enable Maori students to attend university followed by Library School.

4. That the Department of Maori Affairs be approached:

- (a) For establishment of contacts with Maori people for the purpose of making library services better known.
- (b) For the provision of publicity material in national periodicals such as *Te Aou Hou*.

#### NOT RECOMMENDED

The suggestion that there should be a book drive for distribution of donated books in Maori schools is not recommended by the Committee.



When the above report was discussed and approved by the Council of the Association in February of this year, it was decided that immediate approaches should be made to the Minister of Education and to the Maori Education Foundation about recommendations 1 and 3 respectively.

The Foundation has replied to the Association saying it had expressed its strong support to the Minister of Education for the recommendations listed in 1 and also that the proposal 3(c) for the provision of bursaries for Maoris to attend university and subsequently the Library School had been received with considerable interest and was being examined in detail.

The reply from the Minister of Education was more guarded. He said the report had been studied especially from the point of view of timing any extensions of service "which, desirable as they may be, depend so much upon supplies of materials and staff". He said that the report was timely and useful in respect of the Department of Education's current concern for special help for Maori pupils. His most noteworthy point, which the Council agreed should be publicised to members, was that the School Library Service makes books for reading to younger children available to public libraries, other than those of the main cities, and requests for them are welcomed by the Director of the National Library Service. He referred to the increasing supply of books for younger children which was being made available each year by the School Library Service, but made no commitment about the Association's request (Recommendation 1(c)) that the School Library Service should supply books for primers in all schools. This is regrettable because an extension of service at this level, an extension which the Association would like to see available to all children, Maori or pakeha, would be particularly valuable in establishing reading habits amongst children not used to seeing books. Nor did the Minister make a particularly helpful reply to the suggestion that there were country areas where no library service exists at present, as he referred in this connection only to the existing facility for the formation of Country Library Service "B" libraries, which as the Report points out are dependent for their establishment on local enthusiasm. There are clearly areas with large Maori populations which need more than this. On the final recommendation, for a demonstration of library service to Maoris in a selected area, the Minister threw the ball deftly back to the Association saying, "Should your contemplated approach for this purpose to the Maori Education Foundation be sympathetically received, my officers will no doubt make recommendations to me on how this can best be done".

Clearly a better library service for Maoris will not be easy to achieve.